



Fun Along The Way

I have decided on a slightly different line of attack for this month's Coarse Fisherman piece. Most of my articles have been about my angling in the last year, what I have been targeting, the highs and the lows and how I have been going about it.

Well, for this month I have taken a different angle to try to show that fishing should be about enjoyment and having fun and that, sometimes, it's not just about catching big fish.

Keen As Mustard

While mulling over what to write for this month's issue, I thought it would make a change to take young angler, fellow Gardner Tackle employee Matt Ekins, for a day of what I call 'fun fishing'.

That means having some good laughs and, hopefully, catching one or two fish along the way.

Matt is 17 years old and a keen carp angler, always looking for an opportunity to get his rods out. The weather did its worst while I was trying to organise this piece. Every time we arranged a date the temperature would plummet, the lakes would freeze and one morning I awoke to find 10 inches of snow covering the ground!

Anyway, we bided our time and after being away in the Midlands for the weekend, I arrived home to find the temperatures had risen dramatically,

the lakes had thawed and the long range weather forecasters were predicting some mild weather for the week ahead. Favourable conditions at last!

The emphasis would be on getting a few bites, catching some fish and giving us both the opportunity to test some tackle.

Look For A Shallow Lake

The choice of venue after the cold conditions was crucial. Many of our local lakes had been frozen solid on and off for a few weeks. However, the ice had now melted, leaving the water temperatures very low.

We needed a water that we knew well, with a good stock of fish in the high singles and low double figure bracket, with the chance of a better fish, where a few bites could be on the cards if we got it right.

We chose a venue local to us both, council-owned and with a depth of four feet or less. We hoped the mild weather might have warmed the water slightly and encouraged the fish to start moving.

Alan Stagg loves his fishing, whether it is the studied pursuit of a monster or time spent on the bank with a mate or two, with fun top of the agenda. This month he describes a day out on a shallow council-owned lake with pal Matt Ekins.

"We chose a venue local to us both, council-owned and with a depth of four feet or less. We hoped the mild weather might have warmed the water slightly and encouraged the fish to start moving"

Early spring is a great time for this fun-style approach. We had at first planned to use our barbel gear but we soon had to change our approach as a fact-finding trip pinpointed most of the lake's fish population lived out in the middle, feasting on the bloodworm beds there. Thus, we opted for our normal carp gear in order to reach this area and increase our chances of some action.

Stay Active, Stay Alert

Carp fishing these days seems to have lost a lot of its fun and I, personally, get no joy from camping out by a lake for a couple of days at a time with multiple rods, waiting for a chance that may not materialise.

We decided on a far more active approach and wanted to feel the rods bend at the handles and feel the line being torn from our reels, if we were lucky enough to catch anything, that is!

By casting regularly and being pro-active we hoped to get on the fish, rather than sit on our hands and wait for them to come to us.

With the kit sorted, a couple of bags of Sonubaits pellets in various sizes, plus enough PVA and terminal tackle to last the day, we were off. After a short drive I arrived to pick Matt up. It was still dark and we wanted an early start to make the most of the full day ahead.

Choosing Tactics

We had decided to vary our tactics to see what would work best on the day and then swap all the rods on to the most successful combination.

Fishery rules stated that leads should weigh no more than 2oz, which suited us fine on the gear we intended to use, and groundbait was banned.

Single hook-baits cast regularly were tackled up on each of our rods. These can be an effective way of getting a quick bite and by slackening the line right off and fishing for liners we hoped we would be able to pinpoint the rods in areas where we experienced the most activity.



A small PVA bag, the size of a golf ball, was attached to our other rods. These bags contained some 6mm halibut pellets with a matching 13mm pellet on the hair.

We had both decided to keep our set-ups basic as there is no need to overcomplicate things in carp fishing.

Matt decided to use the new Covert Tungsten Tubing, while I settled for a short length of Plummet lead core.

It is always worth paying special attention to the last five feet of your end rig as this is undoubtedly the most important part. The concealment of line is important and we hoped that by paying special attention to this it would help us get a few bonus bites. We both decided to use a lead clip arrangement incorporating Covert tail rubbers and lead clips. Nice, simple and effective. Hook-links were made from 10lb Chod Skin and hooks where size 8 Talon Tips for our pellet rigs and Incisors for our single hook-bait fishing.

A Deadly Pop Up Rig

You will need:

1 Carp Hooks	1 Bait bands
1 Rolling Swivel	1 Coated Braid
1 Rig Rings	1 Scissors

Tie a double overhand loop, the length of the loop will determine the height of the pop up.

Thread the loop through the eye of the hook as shown.

Thread on a large rig ring.

Pass the hook through the loop as shown.

Thread a 4.8mm latex bait band onto the rig ring.

Pull the latex band back through itself with a baiting needle. Pull up tight.

Thread on your chosen pop up. Strip back an inch of Chod skin above the knot, this will act as a hinge ...

... then add a blob of Critical Mass to balance the hook-bait so it slowly sinks and rests on the bottom.

Ready to cast.

Soon after arriving, a fish jumped out in the main body of the lake and I quickly reeled in one of my rods and cast a single pop-up in the direction of the fish. It always pays to cast towards any fish that show, and where there is one, there are always others.

Believe In The Method

I would certainly have used a Method feeder on one rod, combined with an active groundbait mix, if the lake's rules allowed. The Method is an excellent way of catching fish on venues with a good stocking level.

A small, bright bait, popped up by a couple of inches above the feeder, and cast regularly can be a deadly tactic, especially when water temperatures begin to warm. If the bottom is relatively free of debris, then maggots used mag-aligner style could have proved a good bet.

Carp can't resist maggots and this tactic can be very successful when the water temperatures are low or beginning to rise. Small fish are often less active in these weather conditions which can be a drawback when using this tactic.

On The Bank

Arriving at the lake we found the spot we had planned to fish already taken, so we headed to an area that would give us access to the lake's island and the main body of open water. It always pays to keep your options open in early spring as the weather can sometimes be a little unpredictable and the fish sometimes follow suit.

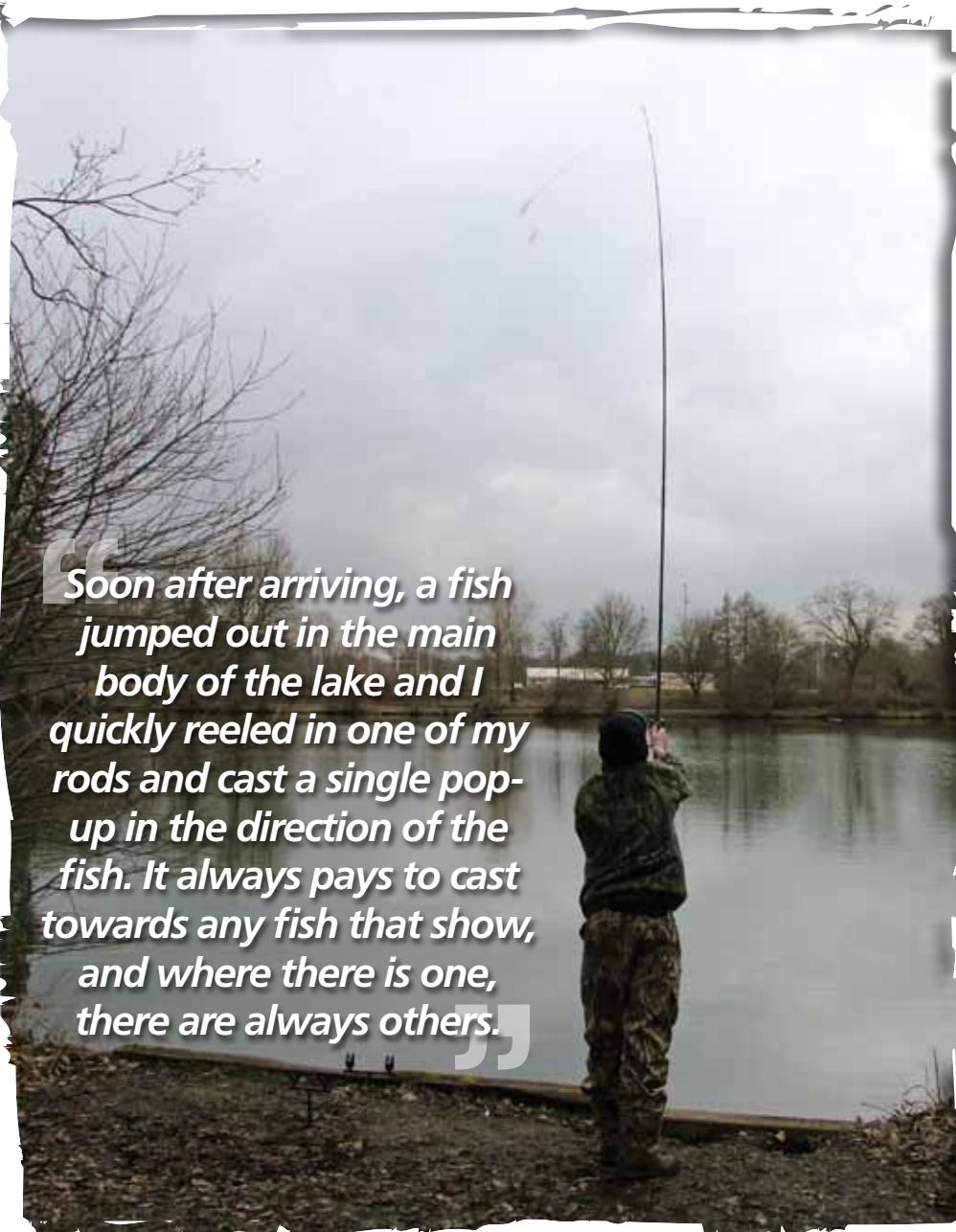
Being the guest, Matt had first choice of swims and he opted for the island, a good bet and an area where we both knew he stood a very good chance of a bite.

Being the guest, Matt had first choice of swims and he opted for the island, a good bet and an area where we both knew he stood a very good chance of a bite. He cast both his rods along its margin in a bid to intercept any fish moving along it, while I fished the open water, deciding to cast regularly in a bid to locate any fish.

Soon after arriving, a fish jumped out in the main body of the lake and I quickly reeled in one of my rods and cast a single pop-up in the direction of the fish.

It always pays to cast towards any fish that show, and where there is one, there are always others. That's what I hoped, anyway.

Using a single hook-bait or small PVA bag is a great way of getting a quick bite and to prove this, twenty minutes after repositioning my rod, the bobbin pulled up to the rod and it was away. After a good fight in the shallow water, the fish was soon in the net.





The day went well and by early afternoon we had shared eight fish between us. All the action had come from a small area in the middle of the lake and the island margin had surprisingly failed to produce.



Double Your Money

After taking a couple of quick snaps, I returned the fish and cast a fresh pop-up back to the same area. Wanting to make the most of this opportunity, I cast my second rod to the same area.

I find it sometimes pays, when there is a going area in a swim, to position two rods here, doubling the chances of a bite.

There were obviously a few fish in the area, as patches of bubbles could be seen on the surface. Half-an-hour later and after a few line bites, the bite alarm signalled our second bite of the day and soon I played a nice-looking Common of just over 10lb to the waiting net.

The day went well and by early afternoon we had shared eight fish between us. All the action had come from a small area in the middle of the lake and the island margin had surprisingly failed to produce.

Matt Joins In

We repositioned Matt's rods out into the open water, which proved a good move, as within the hour he had had two bites, resulting in a couple of nice fish being brought over the net.

With at least ten other anglers on the venue, it seemed that this small area was where the fish wanted to be on the day, as anglers around us had failed to catch.

It was obvious why the fish were held up there, as when reeling in, the hook was covered in bloodworm.

The fish were obviously making the most of this natural larder and they could be seen sending up bubbles regularly as they searched out this food.

It is little signs like these that can make or break a day and it always pays to concentrate and keep your eyes peeled, as it can soon turn your dry net into a wet one. **CF**

